



Check it out!
Useful information on ADHD
for teenagers



Hello and Welcome,

ADHD: you probably hear the abbreviation often, along with a lot of other words like “fidgeter”, “daredevil”, “annoying”, “loud”, and so on. But what exactly is ADHD? If the doctor has diagnosed you with ADHD, your head is probably swimming: What does it mean? What can I do, what do I have to do? And who can help me?

In this booklet you will find out what ADHD can be like, and what it isn't. We'll also give you tips on how to get your everyday life under control and where you can find help and support. The booklet should help you understand your ADHD better and it will give you some tips on dealing with the things you find difficult.



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ADHD – what is it really?

The word is derived from the initial letters of the condition: Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. In other words: People with ADHD have difficulty paying attention and concentrating. These difficulties last longer and go deeper than for many other people. Hyperactivity means inner restlessness. For example, it makes someone want to move around all the time, or gives them a passion for fast activities and rapidly changing inputs.

ADHD is not a matter of strength of will, it is a condition that affects perception and thus your entire way of thinking and acting. Although it does not physically hurt or cause an ugly rash, having ADHD can sometimes make it difficult to have everything under control in everyday life.

Do the following seem familiar?

- You often find it difficult to accept other people's opinions.
- You quickly lose your temper if something is expected of you or if you feel criticised, especially by authority figures such as teachers or parents.
- You are passionate about things that you really enjoy and find everything else pointless and boring, especially when it comes to your duties such as homework or household chores.
- You are easily distracted and spontaneously make decisions that most people can't understand.

- You are often labelled as erratic or unreliable.
- Appointments, dates, exams: who can keep track of all of that?
- You are quick to feel misunderstood or provoked.
- Injustice really gets on your nerves, regardless of whether it happens to you or to others.

It really bothers you that a lot of people have no idea WHY it is so difficult for you to concentrate. Or why you can totally lose yourself in things that interest you, while you put off other things until the last moment, or only do them very sloppily.

To others, you often seem restless, erratic and easily distracted. Even your own family or friends sometimes find you annoying. This leaves you feeling sad and desperate.

Things could be different, though. You can be yourself AND get along well with others.

Tip: If you want to know more about ADHD, check out www.takeda-adhs.de.



Our brain performs brilliantly every day! Billions of nerve cells, which are interconnected in a highly complex network, can communicate with each other extremely quickly. You can picture the thinking brain as a huge computer in which thousands of computing processes take place at the same time, only faster and better.



The neurological basics

The lock and key principle

Information transmission between the individual nerve cells is regulated by neurotransmitters. These are molecules that have a certain shape and that function like a key in a lock: a cell sends the “key”, which fits into the “lock” of another cell. This “opens the door” and information can be transmitted.

There are two very important neurotransmitters: dopamine and norepinephrine. People who have ADHD do not have enough of these two substances. They are mainly lacking in a very specific part of the brain: the frontal lobe. The frontal lobe plays an important role in paying attention, planning actions and behaviour control. If there is too little dopamine and norepinephrine, information is not relayed as it should be.

A bouncer for perceptions

The exact mechanisms are highly complex and to this day have not been fully researched. However, the frontal lobe can be thought of as a bouncer. It sorts and filters everything that wants to get in. It is meant to only let through information that is important for the current action.

“Behind the door” sits the highest authority, practically the executive suite of our brain: consciousness! Consciousness is actually the only thing that we notice out of all the incredible information transmissions taking place in the brain. It determines our thoughts and actions. So, what gets into the executive suite is really important! If the bouncer does not do his job very well, the executive suite will be flooded with stimuli and information. This makes autonomous thinking and action more difficult.



How does the doctor find out if I have ADHD?

There is no one test that will yield a positive or negative result to diagnose ADHD, nor is there one specific symptom: for instance if you are unconcentrated, you do not necessarily have ADHD. Many other conditions can also make you restless or influence your behaviour. Therefore, the doctor who makes the diagnosis will carry out a lot of different tests and conversations with you: First he will get to know you.

How is a diagnosis for ADHD made?

1. Conversations with you and your parents

Firstly, the doctor will talk to you and your parents. He will usually have you fill out questionnaires beforehand. The answers help him assess you and your behaviour better. On the basis of these discussions, the doctor wants to get as precise a picture as possible of you and your challenges.

2. Physical and neurological examination

A thorough physical examination also forms part of the diagnosis. Basic things like your weight, height, blood and also your eyesight and hearing are examined. This will help rule out other causes for your symptoms.

3. Psychological tests

Using different tests, the doctor will assess your ability to remember things, to stay focused and to develop solution strategies for tricky tasks. He will recognise if you show obvious symptoms while performing the tests.

Based on all of these discussions, questionnaires and tests, the doctor can then make a diagnosis. If the doctor has diagnosed you with ADHD, he will work with you and your parents to consider how best to support you in your everyday life.



How is ADHD treated?

As a rule, various treatments are combined, because this usually leads to the most success.

What forms of therapy are there?

- Behavioural therapy is viewed by many experts as a successful treatment method for people with ADHD. There are many different types of behavioural therapy. What all forms of behavioural therapy have in common is that they work on the behaviours from which you suffer. It is decided on an individual basis which type is best for each individual. When you are still quite young, your parents are usually involved in the decision. There are often special courses on offer for parents, such as parent training.
- If ADHD repeatedly leads to stress with your parents and/or siblings, the whole family is offered advice in family therapy.

- Neurofeedback, also known as biofeedback, can help you learn to improve your concentration by sending positive signals to your brain.

- In occupational therapy, you learn in a very practical way to stick to a task, to finish it and not to be so easily distracted.

And what drugs will help me?

If your symptoms are more pronounced, the doctor can prescribe you a drug. Drugs support other therapeutic measures. There are several active ingredients with different properties to choose from. In order to find the right medication, the doctor or therapist will discuss with you what causes problems during the day and what challenges you the most, when you are very active and when you get tired in the evening. That way he can choose just the right drug for you.

ADHD AND SCHOOL



Did you know that a lot of famous people have ADHD just like you? J.Lo has ADHD, as does Justin Timberlake, and even Will Smith! ADHD is a serious condition, but the world is your oyster just the same if you have it. It just depends on how you deal with it and how you use your own potential. The diagnosis actually helps with that. Because now you know why some things, such as concentrating and learning, are so difficult.



Expectations and pressure to perform

So many expectations! It starts as early as nursery school and it gets progressively worse at school. You have to be quiet, your performance is being evaluated, and on top of that you get into conflicts with others. You soon get the feeling that everyone else is deciding everything for you and you cannot make any choices yourself.

That must be very annoying for you. Unfortunately, you can't avoid it. However, we can give you a few tips on how to take control and still ride the wave with the others.

Some things slip by on their own

There is surely something in your life that you find totally absorbing, which you don't have to "study" for. That is because you can absorb and remember the things that really interest you, seemingly without any effort. Just think about what that means for you. You can really be proud of that!

It is more difficult when it comes to topics that are either poorly explained or which do not seem at all relevant for you or your life.

Make it your TOP PRIORITY!

A good trick for these subjects is to make them your TOP PRIORITY. Try to find out what you can use them for in your everyday life, and then do your research! Divide the learning material into small portions and repeat these out loud every now and then.

That works great, for example, with vocabulary or factual knowledge from, say, biology or geography lessons or later in vocational training. It also helps to talk to your parents, friends or someone else about the topic: that way you get what you have learned to stick in your head.



Become your own time manager

Time management: let the boss deal with it.

If you are acting on your own behalf, you are independent and can take a close look at your own time management.

For example, how can you become better organised? A to-do list gives you an overview of everything, and you can use your mobile phone to remind you when homework is due and birthdays and appointments are coming up. There are plenty of apps and other aids to help you organise your everyday life.

I decide when it's the right time!

You yourself know best when you need rest and when you can concentrate better on something. If possible, make your own choice about when to study.

To get used to studying, always try to do it at about the same time. It also really helps to create a quiet place just for yourself where you can do your tasks in peace and without external stimuli.

And how does the information stay in your head? Take a break afterwards – a real one. You will quickly forget all the information you have crammed in if you watch TV, play games or chat afterwards. Lie on your bed and listen to some music, spend some quality time with your pet or go out for a walk in the garden or park.



The art of taming chaos

Tidying up and keeping things that way.

Creating order and maintaining it are two very different things. That is true of the order in your school bag, in your cupboard or on your desk. It's not always easy, but it is particularly important if you have ADHD. That way you can keep track of things and immediately deal with the important ones.

A great trick is to create “parking spaces” for certain things and preferably label them or to stick a photo of the contents on them. These can be boxes, folders or shelves. Let your creativity run wild.

This works for your school paperwork as well as for your socks or underwear. You will be able to find things more easily because you have created a system that matches your very own sense of order!

And a few more general tips for you:

- Doing your homework is quicker if everything is ready beforehand and your desk is cleared.
- A notebook helps, in which you can write down any ideas or appointments you made – or use your mobile phone and set the reminder function so you will not forget anything.
- Don't be afraid to ask again if you have not understood something or if you have the feeling that you have forgotten something.
- The best thing to do is to make a plan for the morning and afternoon. That way you won't forget anything important, and if your days pass off the same way, it will be easier for you to attend to annoying obligations.
- Reward yourself in between, you are doing well.

A vocational training workshop. An instructor in a blue work shirt is looking at a student in a white polo shirt and dark blue overalls who is using a tool on a workbench. Another student in the background is also working. The scene is brightly lit with overhead lights.

NOW WHAT? CAREER CHOICE AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

School will soon be over for you – what a huge success! Then you can choose what you really want to do. However, that is not always that easy. There are so many possibilities, and perhaps also other people's expectations, which can easily bug you.

It is best to use your sense of enthusiasm, since you have more than enough of that. What do you really enjoy doing, what do you find rather boring? What activities offer you enough variety, what do you really want to learn? These questions can help you to make the right career choice.

What are you passionate about?

Perhaps you had a favourite subject at school or you already had great experience during an internship. Are you a computer freak, a technology fan, do you like fashion or are you interested in nutrition? Make a list of the things you are passionate about and the ones you are good at (e.g. drawing, talking, dancing, writing).

Treat it as your top priority. Look into which job descriptions suit your talents, or get advice.
This is how you turn your passion into a job!

It is always hard starting things

Every type of training has some aspects that are as annoying as some of your school subjects. Even if you want to get to your dream job quickly, there will be a phase that you will have to spend learning and doing tasks you don't particularly enjoy (such as photocopying documents, making coffee).

Running away from the issue, arguing or getting annoyed does not help, as these tasks are an unavoidable part of the training. Try to make your tasks as pleasant as possible. Maybe you can listen to music or find a new friend at your vocational school.

You can find help looking for a suitable vocational training at www.adhs-ausbildungskompass.de

Reliability means...

- finishing all the tasks assigned to you, even the unpleasant ones.
- paying attention to all the details that you have been taught for a job.
- asking questions if you have not understood or have forgotten certain things. It is important to understand all of the information in full.

Punctuality means...

- arriving on time every day.
- letting people know if that is not possible, e.g. because you are ill or cannot help being late one day. This shows your boss and your colleagues respect. And gives them time to find a substitute.
- working at a reasonable pace.
- not getting distracted by unimportant things.

Teamwork means...

- sometimes doing things that you don't feel like doing, even if this is very difficult for you.
- keeping agreements and appointments.
- treating your team members, colleagues, and superiors politely and respectfully.
- not needlessly discussing or questioning specifications or a certain way of doing things.
- not badmouthing other people.
- learning to accept criticism. A little trick: Take a deep breath when someone criticises you and listen to them first. You can still react later.



People are individuals and everyone is different. One person could be really clever with their hands, someone else might have a head for figures. In professional life it is good when you can contribute your talents. There are a few qualities that are particularly important in vocational training, but also later on the job, such as reliability, punctuality, and the ability to work in a team.

IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING – TALKING ABOUT ADHD

A photograph of a man and a woman sitting on a couch. The man, on the left, has a beard and is wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a white t-shirt and tan pants. He has his hands covering his face, appearing distressed or frustrated. The woman, on the right, is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and brown pants. She is looking at the man and gesturing with her hands as if she is talking to him. The background shows a bookshelf and a plant.

You have probably been riled up a few times in your life so far and had problems dealing with other people. The older you are, the more experience you will have had with it. It has surely not always been easy, not least because you have often felt misunderstood. However, if you know why you act the way you do and also talk to others about ADHD and what makes you different, they will come to understand and often be sympathetic. Getting on with each other will then become much easier!



First points of contact

If you have a good relationship with your parents, they or maybe just one of them are your first point of contact for questions and problems. If you are feeling sad or really miserable they will be happy to listen.

However, if your relationship with your parents is difficult, it is very important for you to find someone to talk to. It could be a relative, a trusted teacher at school, or your trainer at a sports club. A friend will also offer support.

If you don't have anyone to talk to, you can always find help from numerous organisations. Below are several examples:

- www.adhs-deutschland.de

- www.zentrales-adhs-netz.de

You can find more information on these websites:

www.takeda-adhs.de

www.adhs.info



Tough on the outside, tender on the inside

The silly thing about “being different” is that even though you may act tough, in truth you just want to fit in. And sometimes it makes you feel really bad when things never seem to work out the way you want them to.

But it’s not that hard to fit in. You may have to sometimes overcome your inner fears and approach others and talk to them. This is important so that they understand WHY you are different and that you don’t deliberately do things differently.

This should not lead to you using your “condition” as an excuse or just “doing your own thing” without any consideration for others.

Rather, it serves as an explanation for you and others. And it helps them to understand you better and not to always assume that you deliberately want to annoy them with your behaviour.

Understanding is the way to acceptance, both for yourself and others. Therefore, talk about your ADHD. Tell people what you find difficult and explain that you are making an effort.

The following points can help you in dealing with others:

- Ask the other person to give you feedback or criticism in a friendly and objective manner, perhaps using concrete examples. That way you can use it as guidance. Also calmly explain why you are asking for it (e. g. because you are quick to feel attacked or misunderstood).
- Ask people to be patient if it sometimes takes a little longer for you to internalise certain things. It's not because you're stupid, but because it's a symptom of your ADHD.
- Get people to understand that if you are distracted or if you have forgotten something, you do not do that on purpose to annoy others. Explain that you are already trying hard and are working on yourself.
- Try to work on yourself continuously and to find the best ways to make things easier for you.

There are certain expectations that you cannot get around, for example at work, but also with friends and in relationships. Find your own individual way of dealing with this. Try to listen to the others and identify your own wishes and needs.



When things really go boom!

Firstly, try to slow down arguments. You know better than anyone that you are very spontaneous and sometimes throw your weight around, saying and insinuating things without thinking. Even if you didn't really mean it after you have had some time to think.

There is a great tip to trick your brain and give yourself a little time: Repeat what the other person said, at first using the same words: "Did I understand correctly that you are angry because I ...?".

The other way around, you could also ask the person you are arguing with to repeat what you have just said. That gives you the chance to get an immediate echo of what has actually just shot out of your mouth so spontaneously and, most importantly, how the other person understood it. Give it a try!

A guide to arguments

- United instead of against each other: Try to see the people around you as partners and not as opponents.
- Take a break before you lose it. Not everything you think and feel has to be said immediately. Stopping to think puts things into perspective.
- It takes all sorts to make a world. Your perspective is not the only true one. Your opinion matters, but not everyone has to think like you do.
- Not all criticism is an attack. Constructive criticism can help you grow.
- A sense of humour goes a long way. It is not important to always be right in everyday life. A smile is usually more helpful.
- Also, consider whether it is the right time and place for an argument.
- If you have made a mistake or lost control, you should apologize afterwards.



Danger, it's addictive!

What exactly is addiction?

If a person is addicted to something, whether a drug or a certain activity, they have an irresistible urge to take the addictive substance or to do certain things. They lose self-control and are "controlled by their addiction".

If that person can't get the drug or do what they are addicted to, they get withdrawal symptoms. They can then become very nervous, aggressive and generally unbearable. They may also experience pain and nausea. Especially with drugs, very serious health problems are often the consequence.

Increased risk with ADHD – why?

Many addictive substances vastly change your thoughts and actions. Some of them can be bought quite legally, such as cigarettes, caffeine, or alcohol. Others are forbidden and can only be bought illegally. These substances interact with your ADHD which can have a variety of consequences. However, in most cases, these are unforeseeable and uncontrollable. If you find some of the consequences pleasant or stimulating for a little while,

you run the risk of taking the addictive substance more and more often and can no longer control when and how much you take. Unfortunately, that is what drugs are like: at first they give you a new feeling, maybe a "kick", but they very soon take over and start controlling you.

If you have the feeling that you cannot give up an addictive substance or a behaviour, you can contact the following counselling centres:

Nummer gegen Kummer:

www.nummergegenkummer.de
Tel.: 116 111

Drug emergency service:

www.sucht-und-drogen-hotline.de
Tel.: 01805 31 30 31*

Child and youth emergency service:

Tel.: 0800 111 0333

*Rate for landline charges is 0,20 €/ min.
Mobile phone rate is 0,60 €/ min.



FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE

ADHD sometimes complicates interpersonal relationships, whether in the family, with coworkers, a friend, or partner. The “problematic” effects of ADHD sometimes interfere, especially when dealing with people your own age. Therefore, as a rule: The better you know yourself and your “darker side”, the easier it will be to understand your own and other people’s behaviour. And that ultimately helps you to get along with them better.



Relationships can be complicated at times

Nobody is great all the time and everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. There are still a few typical effects of ADHD which can make life difficult, as the following examples show:

- Shooting your mouth off at someone can unintentionally interrupt or hurt them.
- People often see your lack of attention as a lack of interest, so this can also be hurtful.
- People with ADHD can often be very impulsive, so they do things that a neurotypical friend might not be able to understand at all. This can make them come across as very erratic and unreliable.

- You may have a tendency to take risks.
- You might also have very high expectations of a friendship and be very disappointed if these are not fulfilled.

It is often difficult to expect understanding for your ADHD. It is important for you to understand that relationships are give and take. You can't just expect understanding; you also have to develop understanding for the people around you.

Perhaps the following thoughts will help you:

- Everyone has their quirks and peculiarities – even people without ADHD! Everyone is vulnerable at times and sometimes feels attacked, just like you!
- When the going gets tough, it helps to maintain perspective: In difficult situations, take at least three deep breaths or briefly leave the room, letting people know you will be right back. Then try to look at the difficult situation from the outside, as if you weren't directly involved. It may then be easier for you to find a compromise or to approach others.
- What you expect from others, you should also be capable of giving: above all, acceptance, respect, and understanding.

What you should also know ...

The great desire to fit in may lead you to do things that cannot be undone.

Your openness to new things and your willingness to take risks may make you do things that you later regret. These are some risk areas you might find yourself in:

- extreme eating disorders
- addictive behaviour (see above)
- lots of tattoos and/or piercings
- adherence to extreme groups
- illegal activities such as spraying, subway surfing, etc.



Love and sexuality

Unfortunately, ADHD also brings with it a few unpleasant risks, especially when it comes to sexuality. Your spontaneity, the impulsivity that sometimes makes you do things without thinking that you later regret, often leads to mistakes that cannot be undone.

There are scientific studies showing that adolescents with ADHD are three times more likely to frequently change their sexual partners than adolescents without ADHD. (This is known as promiscuity.)

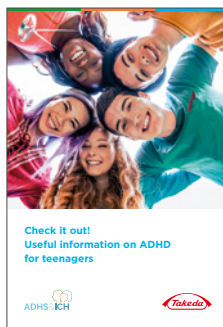
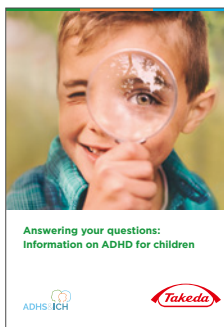
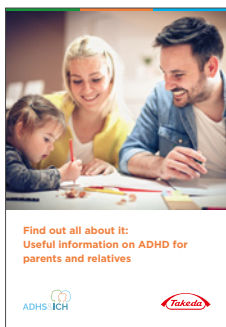
This naturally increases the risk of unwanted pregnancy. About 38% of adolescents with ADHD have an unwanted pregnancy, compared with 4% in the general population. Furthermore, frequently changing sexual partners increases the risk of becoming infected with sexually transmitted diseases.

One of the ways to protect yourself from “mistakes” is to be aware of your disorder and its typical characteristics and to look for ways of controlling your own behaviour. And you should always incorporate at least one safety filter:

- take a good friend with you,
- talk to someone you trust,
- use contraceptives,
- use a condom to protect against sexually transmitted diseases.

Make it your golden rule to always speak to someone you trust before going through with any spontaneous ideas! Perhaps you could also agree a signal with them that will help you not to get swept along in an impulsive act.

Our information brochures on ADHD



Further information can be found at:

www.takeda-adhs.de



or on Facebook/Instagram at

ADHS und Ich

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